

TITLE: Dr. James D. Parks

JOB DESCRIPTION: Head of Arts Department

WHERE INTERVIEWED: At his office

INTERVIEWED BY: Elbert Bennett

AGE WHEN INTERVIEWED: 68 years old

LENGTH OF SERVICE AT LINCOLN UNIVERSITY: 48 years

I have been with the Art Department since 1927. I was twenty years old and I built it from an old department. They had five subjects when I started here. We have built it to the present level of offering 23 courses and two degrees in art. We have a beautiful art center. When I began here we had just one room with one teacher and four to five courses.

In respect to my education, I finished my undergraduate work at Bradley and received my Master's at Iowa. I did some work in the Chicago Art Institute.

How did you relate to your colleagues as teachers?

Back then, of course, they had a smaller faculty. They had more access to the best black brains because there was virtually no competition from the white colleges. The faculty in the 30's was very strong all around because they only had to have one or two in each department. If you had one strong man they did not surround him with

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I have been with the Art Department since 1927. I was twenty years old and I built it from an old department. They had five subjects when I started here. We have built it to the present level of offering 25 courses and two degrees in art. We have a beautiful art center. When I began here we had just one room with one teacher and four to five courses.

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weaker men.

How did you relate to the administration?

Well, I personally got along with most of them but some of them I didn't. I've been able to get along with most of the presidents here at Lincoln.

What was the size of the student body when you first came here?

When I got here everyone was delighted. There were 188 college students that we were going to have to teach; and there were about 25 teachers.

How did you consider the rules governing the social life of the students?

The students of the 20's and 30's were more willing to accept discipline. In the early days the girls' dorms were locked around 8:30 p.m. and nobody went in after that. And, of course, the students were too poor to have cars and most of the faculty were also too poor. The discipline was tighter and those who broke the discipline were on their way home the next morning. The student government came on later; but at that time the discipline of the students was mainly in the hands of the president. We did not have as many problems as we have with the present generation.

How would you rate the curriculum?

It was just as strong as we have now. It was more limited than now but what we had was excellent.

Was the curriculum attuned to turn out men and women equipped to begin

their life work or to go on to graduate schools?

Some prepared in pre-medicine or government or prepared for law and others went in the teaching profession. Journalism came in the 1940's and it prepared graduate students to go into a profession. Men like Dr. Savage, Dr. Kildare, Dr. Greene and Professor Blue and Dr. Pawley are all very strong men. So the departments headed by a few strong men made the whole setup pretty strong.

What were their strengths?

They were outstanding men in their fields. They were experienced men and they had written books that were known nationally.

Did they have any shortcomings?

No, most of the people were excellent in the 30's.

How did you relate to the students?

I think there were good attitudes between the teachers and students. That generation had more respect for the teachers and the student body was more serious because they were really interested in getting their education.

What about the men's and women's dorms?

There weren't as many as there are now. They used to have a study hour in which the dorms were quiet for study.

Was the library adequate?

The library isn't even adequate today. But considering the resources, it did the best it could under the situation. The library was

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in Memorial Hall.

What about the auditorium?

The auditorium facilities were poor, it was in Memorial Hall, too.

Were there any academic interactions between Lincoln and the University of Missouri?

No. Not in the earlier days.

Was there any athletic interaction between the two universities?

No.

Were the science labs adequate?

As far as personnel; yes, and equipment, for what they were doing. Some of the best chemists were developed here then. Moddy Taylor, a top scientist, is now head of the Department of Chemistry at Howard and was a nuclear scientist.

Did many students major in science at the time?

I don't have any idea.

Do you know what most students majored in at that time?

Well, most of it was in teacher training, with a few courses in law, pre-medicine, science and later on journalism.

Did you devote all your time to teaching?

Oh yes. In fact, there is, and always will be, the stipulation that teachers cannot take any other job, or part time job, without permission from the President.

Did you serve on any committees at that time?

Yes. I was Chairman of the Athletic Committee and served on

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other committees, some very important committees of the university at that time.

Which committee did you consider the most important?

The one called Public Relations Committee.

Which one did you serve on the longest?

Probably the Athletic Committee. That is the one I liked the best because I was interested in athletics. At one time I was a coach here.

Did you engage in community work?

A little. We had a N.A.A.C.P. Chapter, a church and that sort of thing.

What was the attitude of the black community toward Lincoln?

Like most college towns you have a barrier between the people at Lincoln and the people in town. I was surprised when I first came here to find that only a few students came from Jefferson City.

What was the attitude of the white community toward Lincoln?

In the earlier days Lincoln was completely isolated from the community.

What was your attitude toward the white community?

At that time the white community had very little contact with Lincoln.

What was your attitude toward the black community?

Well, of course, always a sort of kinship with them.

Do you recall any outstanding students that came here in your department?

Yes. We had a number of them. Dr. Charles Stallings has a doctor of education degree. He is now Dean at Boys State College and Dr. Anderson Macklin is head of the Art Department at Virginia State. Lemmie Burden is head of the Art Department at Vashon High School in St. Louis plus so many more that I cannot remember them all. There are those who got their Master of Fine Arts degree like Huston Chandler who obtained his degree from the University of Iowa, Adrian Hoad from Michigan State, and Jeffery Burns from Southern Illinois University. Was the salary of the two universities comparable in rank, training, and tenure?

No. In the early days tenure and salaries were very low. I came to Lincoln for what was considered a handsome salary in those days of \$180 a month. A Ph.D. only made \$275 a month in those days. Salaries were much lower at Lincoln than at the University of Missouri. How did the 1954 Supreme Court decision affect your teaching and personality?

It didn't change either my teaching or my personality.

What about Lincoln and the community?

It was more important to Lincoln. Salaries went up and more people enrolled here. Since integration the campus has had more buildings. In your opinion, what was the attitude of the nation?

I think that Lincoln was among the first to integrate in large numbers.

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Have you made any special contributions in your field?

I have had many publications and many one man shows at colleges. I have also been guest lecturer at over a dozen colleges.

Do you belong to any professional societies?

Yes. I belong to the National Art Education Association, the College Art Association of America, and the Missouri College art Conference.

Did the school finance expenses to any society meetings?

Yes. Usually only partially.

What was the attitude of the Administration toward the faculty attending these meetings?

Well; according to the financial means that were available. What is your opinion of the future of Lincoln?

I think that it has a great future. The only thing is that by the force of numbers there is a danger of it becoming predominantly a white institution.

What are the highlights during your connection with Lincoln?

A highlight was in 1933 when Lincoln was accredited by the North Central Association. The next highlight would be the 1954 Supreme Court decision which integrated the schools. That probably saved Lincoln from being shut down because the state probably would not have supported the school with such a small enrollment. The campus was practically rebuilt by President Dawson in the fourteen years he served.

What about the Gaines case?

The Gaines case was very important. In this case, a resident citizen of Missouri wanted to study law. At that time he either had to enroll out-of-state or at Lincoln University Law School in St. Louis. In the south it had a great effect because they had to build up the faculties, accredit the schools, build law schools and raise salaries.

What impelled him to enroll at the University of Missouri?

Well, I knew Gaines personally. He was a rather gregarious fellow but two lawyers in St. Louis were interested in using him as a guinea pig. No one knows what became of him as he just disappeared. Not even his parents know what happened to him. He left a friend's house in Chicago one Sunday night and was never seen again. This was while the case was going on.

What effect did it have on Lincoln University?

Well, we got less than any other southern schools such as Florida A & M, and other great schools got far greater benefits.

Was there any cooperation between blacks and whites in academics?

No. There wasn't any contact between the two.

What was the attitude of the black and white faculty toward each other?

The first white faculty didn't come until the early 50's. They were accepted.

What was the attitude of the black student to the incoming white student?

That's hard to say. They seemed to get along all right and there

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was no villence between them as far as I know. There may be a resentment toward the whites because they don't take much interest in the activities.

What was the attitude of the administration and faculty toward the incoming whites?

Well, I guess they welcomed them. For one thing it saved the school. In the earlier years when President Young was here I had the privilege of meeting my Uncle John Draine. I met Dave Harper, alsq a founder. I never saw anyone give money like they did. Draine and Harper were light complexioned. Both were clear in mind and interested in the school. They were able to tell me much about money details (raised in Louisana and Texas). Draine walked all the way from Montgomery City to Jefferson Barracks to join the Union Army. Dave Harper was also from Montgomery City. Most of the Missouri troops for the Civil War came from the central part of Missouri including such counties as Howard, Callaway, Montgomery, and Audrain which had the biggest slave population in Missouri. This is the reason they selected Jefferson City for the school. They came from small towns, farms and slave plantations in the area. In this area it is still called Little Dixie right across the Missouri River as you go into Callaway County. The black soldiers followed the Union because they were promised freedom. A slave would walk 60 to 70 miles for freedom.

Jesse James contributed a sum of money to Lincoln University.

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He liked to play Robin Hood.

What do you know about President Allen?

I didn't know him. That was before my time.

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